god is on the radio

a we know the devil zine

God is on the Radio is a free digital fanzine centered around the visual novel We Know the Devil, created by Aevee Bee and Mia Schwartz, and focusing on the relationships between its three protagonists, Neptune, Jupiter, and Venus. This zine contains 25 pieces of art and writing by 19 contributors over 45 pages.

Thank you to all the talented artists and writers who worked hard to make this zine possible!

CORGIN

The basement is a bit colder than the rest of the house, a welcome relief given how unnaturally warm it is for a mid October evening. Then again, Jupiter is still wearing that bulky jacket, so maybe it's cold for the "charming" little Southern town where her dad lives. Neptune and Venus are both from a few states farther north, so autumn being as hot as it is here is something neither of them are used to.

Venus has been spoiled today; Neptune and Jupiter insisted on taking her out to pick some clothes out, clothes she would never have the guts to put on in her hometown but she felt the most comfortable she's ever been in. Tonight, she can dress in all the pretty blouses and frilly sundresses she wants, and she doesn't have to go back to hiding in a little shell for another week. A faint glow seems to surround her, the faintest hint of wings between her shoulder blades. Now, one of her hands is held in one of Neptune's, and she can't even bring herself to be flustered because she's so enthralled by fine streaks of pastel yellow the brush makes against her nails.

This is what she's always wanted, and it's enough to work her to tears.

"Come on," Neptune says, her voice a mimic of annoyance despite the small smile on her face. "I'm the only one here that's allowed to have waterworks, thank you."

She's right about that; she's more at ease than Venus or Jupiter have ever seen her, a faint smirk across her lips and all sorts of shades of nail polish sitting by her legs. She's wholly focused on Venus' nails, and this focus combined with her relaxation has resulted in a steady stream of water from one of her shoulders - it doesn't impede with her work, but runs down her back into a bucket usually used to catch water from the leaking roof when it rains. Jupiter is sitting on an old pull out couch, watching her girlfriends with a small smile on her face and a

resting on her thighs. She hasn't turned a page in a while, but her hand still sits on the page like she's ready to any moment - despite knowing full well that she's too transfixed by watching the smooth strokes of Neptune's nail brush and the easy, comfortable smile on Venus' face to get much of any more reading done.

Extra hands sit on the blankets, idly waiting for their owner to need them. In the moment, though, she's content with not being touched. She's content with watching.

That changes, though, as she sees Neptune finish the final nail on Venus' right hand and sees the look of wonder on her girlfriend's face. For Jupiter to let anyone touch her hands is rare, and she has never in her life wanted to do much of anything overly feminine with her appearance - but as she glances to a forest green shade of nail polish by Neptune's knee, she realizes that she wants to give it a try.

Neptune is startled when, as she's cracking her knuckles after painting Venus' nails, Jupiter suddenly sits down to her right with a hand extended. "Can I have green?" she asks, a bright pink blush spreading across her cheeks.

A little startled by the intimacy of someone who's so scared of physical contact wanting her to touch them, Neptune hesitates for a moment before nodding and gently taking Jupiter's hand in her own. The athlete doesn't flinch, but seems to lean a little closer to her girlfriend. Neptune is pretty sure she shouldn't be the one a little unsettled by the sudden change, but as she finished painting the nails of Jupiter's left hand, she couldn't help but feel a little proud of the progress the other girl had made in the months since they sat with the Devil in a rickety cabin.

It takes a moment for her to realize that Jupiter isn't even wearing hair ties on her wrist.

She's proud of all three of them for working past the idea that their very existence is a heinous sin, and that feelings they can't control are crimes that

need to be rehabilitated from. Venus has become comfortable expressing herself as the woman she is, if not in public - when they can meet together, she'll borrow Neptune's clothes or wear the pride bracelet Jupiter got for her at some festival or another on her wrist, and on social media, she's open about being trans. Jupiter's mom had been horrified when she came home with two girlfriends and a stronger sense of self, and let her live with her dad full time, where she had begun feeling a little more comfortable with being who she is and accepting that she wasn't *born* evil, nobody is.

Neptune... well, she's still pretty much the same, but she instead of just resting with her all the time, her anger at the lot she'd received in life had calmed from a devastating flood to a light drizzle unless provoked. She might still be a bitch, but she's more at peace now. Coming to terms with the devil that dwells inside her is the best decision she's ever made, really, and she's pretty sure it's the same for both of her girlfriends as well.

When she finishes painting Jupiter's nails, she considers for a moment giving her a kiss, but decides it's best not to rush it. She nods, and leans back. "How does that look?" she asks her girlfriend, even though she knows for a *fact* that the athlete is going to say that it looks perfect and she's *really* happy with it - maybe she just wants the praise for even the easiest nail job she's ever done, maybe she wants to see the smile on the other girl's face.

"It looks perfect. I like it," Jupiter responds, and Neptune decides rather quickly at the sight of a toothy grin and slightly pinkened cheeks that it's the latter. Despite that being her goal, though, the sheer amount of *love* her girlfriend looks to her with is very quickly overwhelming, and the very flustered rebel had to get up and step back almost immediately. Seriously, she should not be the one this intimidated by a little bit of intimacy.

Neptune claps her hands together, and makes her way over to the pile of movies they dug out from the five dollar bin when they went shopping that day.

"We're going to watch a scary movie," she announces, more as a declaration than a suggestion. When she glances back to the other two, she sees that both Venus and Jupiter are seated on the pull out couch; as she expected, Venus has a little bit of a grimace on her face, and she laughs.

After popping the DVD for some 80's gorefest into an absolutely *ancient* player connected to a TV that looked like it had been rotting in Jupiter's dad's basement since 1993, Neptune returns to her girlfriends and laid down across their laps. She reaches up, gently pats Venus' cheek. "Come *on,* you can't just keep avoiding everything scary for the rest of your life. You might as well watch a horror movie with us so we can protect you."

Venus snorts and rolls her eyes, leans forward and parts some hair that fell into Neptune's face when she laid down and presses a kiss to her forehead before leaning her head against Jupiter's shoulder. "Well, as long as my tough, strong girlfriends are here to protect me, I *guess* I can handle a little blood," she teases - and at least she doesn't seem to be lying, her expression a little more eased than it had been when the suggestion was initially raised.

Neptune admires the way that both Jupiter and Venus have eyes that give away how they're feeling underneath what they actually say. For someone who knows them really well like she does, all it really takes to dig into what their words actually mean is looking a little deeper, checking the expressions in their eyes. Jupiter might say she's fine, but the faintest twitch in green eyes could hint that she was sinking into internal conflict and self loathing again. Venus might say that she was feeling great, but a glance down could reveal doubt and sadness. *I'm too gay to be this close to both of them,* she thinks to herself, but doesn't make a move to get away again. This time, she sinks into the girls' laps and lets herself feel.

She presses the play button to start up the DVD, and even though her eyes are settled on the screen, her attention is anything but. She's seen this

movie before, but even if she hadn't, every movie like it is the same and the feeling of Venus quietly braiding her hair to stay calm and Jupiter's hands resting on her side and rubbing in an easy, absentminded pattern is *incredibly* distracting - and in a good way. It makes her feel safe. It makes her feel loved.

Moments like this make her acutely aware of how rare it's been in the entire rest of her life to feel safe and loved. It's almost saddening, but she refuses to feel anything but at peace tonight. She can put a pin in any sadness and save it for later when she isn't surrounded by her girlfriends with a laughably bad movie playing in the background.

A woman screams on the TV, and she feels Venus' hand pull on her hair as she squeals. Neptune can't help but laugh at how easily startled she is, the light she gives off almost making it difficult to focus on the screen at all. Jupiter doesn't react to the murder onscreen, but her hand does grip Neptune's side when Venus makes a noise. "It looks like she had a juice box in her shirt and the guy just made it explode with his knife," she comments, partially out of an actual need to make fun of the notoriously bad special effects of 80's B movies and partially in an attempt to keep Venus and Jupiter from getting scared.

There's a pause then as the three of them watch the movie, and it's Jupiter that eventually speaks up again. "You know... someday, we're going to be able to do this every night. We won't have to worry about what my mom or either of your parents say ever again."

It's something that seemed like a far off dream when they were spending a night in a crumbling cabin surrounded by Jesus, or even a week ago when Venus still wasn't totally sure if she was going to be able to visit and Neptune was throwing an explosive fit over voice chat after a particularly nasty fight with her father. Now, though, with some version of happiness and freedom here and tangible...

None of them can really wait for the rest of their lives.

elle 2019

PLAY
VHS

WORST
THREE
GIRLS

I WANT TO TOUCH, I WANT TO BE TOUCHED, I WANT TO HURT I WANT TO BE HURT AND IF YOU FEEL THE SAME
BAD
YOU
OR
GROUP

It's after dinner, and Group West is loitering in their cabin, having nothing else to do. They think about how today was miserably hot and dull and how tomorrow will be the same, and how they have three more weeks of this torment to suffer through. The cicadas scream outside, and each girl wishes that could be her.

Jupiter is sitting cross-legged on the floor disassembling and reassembling her radio over and over again. It helps her think, and she wants to memorize all the components. She wants to know her radio like the back of her hand, so maybe the camp counselors will trust her with it enough for her to get a transformation sequence.

Neptune is lying on her side on her bottom bunk, like a dragon in her lair. The humid air is filled with the tapping of her fingers on her phone screen, texting someone or other. Venus is sitting on the top bunk, kicking her legs and staring glassy-eyed at the wall.

The sound of fingers on a screen has stopped, and Neptune is observing Jupiter's nightly ritual with watchful eyes. Jupiter feels her gaze on her hands as she works. Her hands are nothing to look at, nails bitten to the quick and calluses on her fingers from playing guitar. Not like Neptune's hands, nails painted a deep ocean blue, perfectly groomed. She wonders if Neptune is judging her, then discards the thought. Neptune isn't like that. Probably. Neptune is an enigma wrapped in a mystery.

"Hey." Neptune says suddenly, and Jupiter fumbles the tiny conductor, nearly drops it. "Oh, did I startle you?"

"No, you're fine." Jupiter finishes reassembling her radio for the fifth or sixth time and briefly pauses to look up at Neptune, dares to look into her eyes. Neptune's eyes are such a deep blue they almost look black, and her emotions are hard to discern. More than once, Jupiter has caught herself thinking that Neptune's eyes are like the ocean at night; dark and mysterious, but full of life beneath the surface.

"What are you thinking about?" Neptune asks, and Jupiter knows that *your eyes* is definitely the wrong answer.

Instead, she says, "Oh, you know, my radio." She pats it with a forced sort of love.

Neptune smirks. It throws Jupiter off, even though Neptune is nearly always smirking for one reason or another. "Your hands are big."

"Are they?" Jupiter feels the tops of her cheeks getting red. "I thought my hands were normal."

"Your hands are normal. Mine are teeny." Neptune takes Jupiter by the wrist and brings her hand up. "Here, let's compare."

Neptune presses her hand against Jupiter's hand, her fingers against Jupiter's fingers, and both their hands are sweaty and gross even though they both showered not long ago since it's so ridiculously hot, but it's nice. It's dangerously nice.

"You have really long fingers." Neptune says in the same nonchalant tone she says everything in. Jupiter must be imagining the slight crack in Neptune's voice, because the edges of her mind are fraying as her sweaty palm is pressed to Neptune's sweaty palm. There is a plain black hair tie wrapped around Jupiter's wrist, and Jupiter longs to snap it hard against her skin, the pain delivering her clarity.

"Thank you. My… my dad has the same hands." Jupiter's fingers twitch; she wants to lace them together with Neptune's so, so badly.

"Does he?" Neptune says as she shifts position and her hand almost leaves Jupiter's and Jupiter worries for a minute she might cry. "You've talked about him before - it's obvious he likes you a lot."

"Of course he does. He's my dad." Jupiter has no idea what Neptune is trying to say, but she rarely has any idea what Neptune is trying to say. "And your hands aren't that small, Neptune. They're barely smaller than mine."

There's a brief flicker of emotion beneath the still pond of Neptune's expression - mirth? Resentment, maybe? - before she goes back to normal and takes her hand away and Jupiter doesn't cry.

Venus is watching this entire display with the soft, pacifying smile she always wears. Venus' expressions are as much a part of her outfit as her clothes. Jupiter catches sight of her and beckons her down. "Come here, Venus. Your hands are big."

Venus gets down from the bunk slowly, as if worried she's getting punked. When it's evident she won't be chastised, she relaxes, and sits down on the floor across from Jupiter. Jupiter brings Venus' hand up to press against her own, and it's just as nice as it was with Neptune. This relaxes Jupiter, because it's proof she's not a weirdo.

"See, Neptune, these are big hands." Jupiter thinks she sees Venus' smile fade a little but she's not sure.

Neptune shakes her head. "Whatever, Jupiter, it doesn't matter that much." Jupiter feels like she's failed a test, and her stomach drops as Neptune turns away.

"Your hands are nicer than mine." Venus says softly. "Guitarist hands."

"What does that mean?"

"It's like Neptune said. Long fingers." Venus isn't looking directly at Jupiter, and Jupiter is confused.

"Well, whatever. It's not that big a deal." Jupiter's laugh crackles at the edges like radio static. "It's getting late, I think I'm gonna sleep."

She climbs into her bottom bunk directly across from Neptune's and gets under the covers, facing away from both of the others, away from that strikingly beautiful girl, and snaps the hair band around her wrist twice. Once for each.

Only three more weeks, she breathes to herself.

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The summer heat burned their skin, it was almost like they could hear it sizzle, but it was really just the soft buzzing of the radios. They stood tall, all camouflaged with their weathered colors in the trees. Sticky sweat rolled down their skin while they sat on the grass that pricked them through their clothes.

Neptune was ecstatic, weirdly, to finally break free of the starchy uniforms and had clothes that reflected herself and brought personality to herself in Jupiter's eyes. Shockingly, she became even more comfortable and carefree in a dark blue spaghetti-strap top and ripped up jeans. Her hair pooled around her on the ground as she laid still, nonchalantly blowing a hypnotizingly pink bubble. It grew and grew, then popped onto her lips in a grimey mess. Jupiter sniffled a little and smiled slightly before laying back next to her, still clad in her army jacket. She traded in her uniform for a rusty red top and some jeans that really overheated her.

Out of the corner of her eye, Neptune shot her a look— not before glancing at her phone. She licked the gum off her mouth and continued again with blowing another bubble, repeating the process squarely a few more times. Then it popped. Then it rounded out. And popped... And rounded...

And with another pop, Jupiter gave a short awkward laugh, trying to break the everlasting loop of gum. It seemed broken as Neptune looked at her out of the corner of her eyes, lips still. Jupiter slowly sighed, only to watch Neptune do it again in a mocking manner by making a show of the gum popping tremendously.

“Don’t... you think that’s just a little gross?” Jupiter asked slowly, loosely smiling to her. Neptune shook her head, did it again, then took the wrapper of the gum and brought it to her mouth. “Yeah. Cause it’s covered in my saliva.”

“Yeah, and that’s fine...” Her hands got somewhat clammy, but she shrugged and propped herself up. Neptune stared up at her, then spit her gum out and threw it into the grass closest to the camp. “Hope someone steps in that.” Jupiter couldn’t help but enjoy somewhat of how she acted, steely cool and terribly herself. She didn’t bother to acknowledge the gum further.

But camp, she felt like she could bring up the terrors and humidity of camp, especially since maybe they wouldn’t even see each other again. She scratched at a mosquito bite and watched a counselor toss a radio to another camper. “Hey Neptune?”

“What?” She groaned and turned onto her side to properly face Jupiter. She was so close. Jupiter blinked slowly and looked at Neptune, saying, “Will you remember camp? Or, what we all experienced?” She watched Neptune search her face, scrutinize for answers, then do the same as she did. When she looked to the camp, she noticed campers rolling their bags out as they tread to the lunch tables. They were the people she hoped to never see again-- or at least to never have to talk to again.

“It’ll be stuck with us forever. It’s inevitable that we dwell on it.” Neptune said in an exasperated tone, then looked at her phone again.

“On us?” Neptune closed her eyes when Jupiter asked this, then shook her head. “That, I don’t think I’ll forget that.” She said as she set her phone down.

Jupiter chuckled softly and mumbled, “You’ll forget me, I’m sure of it.” Those words stuck to Neptune the moment she said it. She sat up straight quickly and leaned close to her. With how strangely and deeply enamoured she felt to her, how could she? Betray her feelings? “That’s a dumb thing to say. You have no idea, really.” She grumbled, then turned away from her to look at the few parents who approached their children.

People who they knew had taken their baggage with them and disappeared into the cars, leaving without leaving a trace of them. Neptune sighed and turned to Jupiter again, reaching out to hold her hand. She thought it out for a feel long moments, then took her warm palm, giving a cautionary glance as she did to the others. When she finally looked to her, she leaned over and pressed her lips to Neptune’s. Neptune’s eyes widened for a quick moment, then she pulled her closer by her arm, losing herself in the kiss.

Neptune tasted like sugary saccharine, a taste Jupiter had felt comforted and compelled by. It was like being pulled into home. Home. Jupiter reluctantly pulled away and nodded to the cars that seemed far from them. “I don’t know how much longer we have together, but I don’t want to not see you,” Her hand cupped her face, she could feel her own cheeks burn as she smiled lightly. “I can’t imagine waking up and not hearing you, just talk to me or rant about something!” Jupiter said desperately, causing Neptune to very slightly smile, then pull Jupiter into an embrace. She calmed down and buried her face in Neptune’s shoulder, frustrated tears rolling down her cheeks as she sniffled. Neptune closed her eyes and rubbed her back soothingly.

“Give me your hand.” Jupiter sniffled and pulled back, shakily holding her hand out to her. With her trust, Neptune gently took her wrist and fished out a

pink pen from her bag. She began to write numbers on Jupiter's palm, tickling her skin and provoking a small laugh from her. Seeing her face light up with her giggles made Neptune smile slightly and warmed her cheeks. Once finished, she very precisely drew a tiny heart next to the last number and tentatively pulled her hand away from her's.

"Put it in your phone, I'll always be available for you." Jupiter smiled when she said this, then took her hand and began to do the same with her pen. Neptune covered her mouth with her free hand and tried to hide her own smile, then waited for her to finish up. She could see her writing was shaky, but didn't say anything to further embarrass her. She also didn't mention how she had her phone right in her lap. She took her hand back when she finished, then picked her phone up and quietly typed in her number.

Jupiter laughed softly and pushed her own bangs back, nervously watching her type it in. "I... Could've just put it straight into your phone, couldn't I?" Neptune gave a curt nod, then waved her phone at her. "You could have, but it was a sweet gesture." She looked down at her hand, looking at the metallic pink writing that had been scribbled onto her hand lovingly. She closed her hand into a fist and dropped it in her lap.

Neptune's eyes flickered down to the grass as she breathed in deeply and glanced back up to Jupiter. She took Jupiter's hand once again, ignoring the sudden, incessant car horn honking. A certain reluctance fell over her when she turned around and caught a glimpse of a sleek black car with a woman in the passenger seat waving to her rapidly. Her hand slipped away from Jupiter's, fingers catching onto her own. Her green eyes widened, staring at Neptune as if ready to plead with her not to leave. She began to tearfully grimace, then slowly

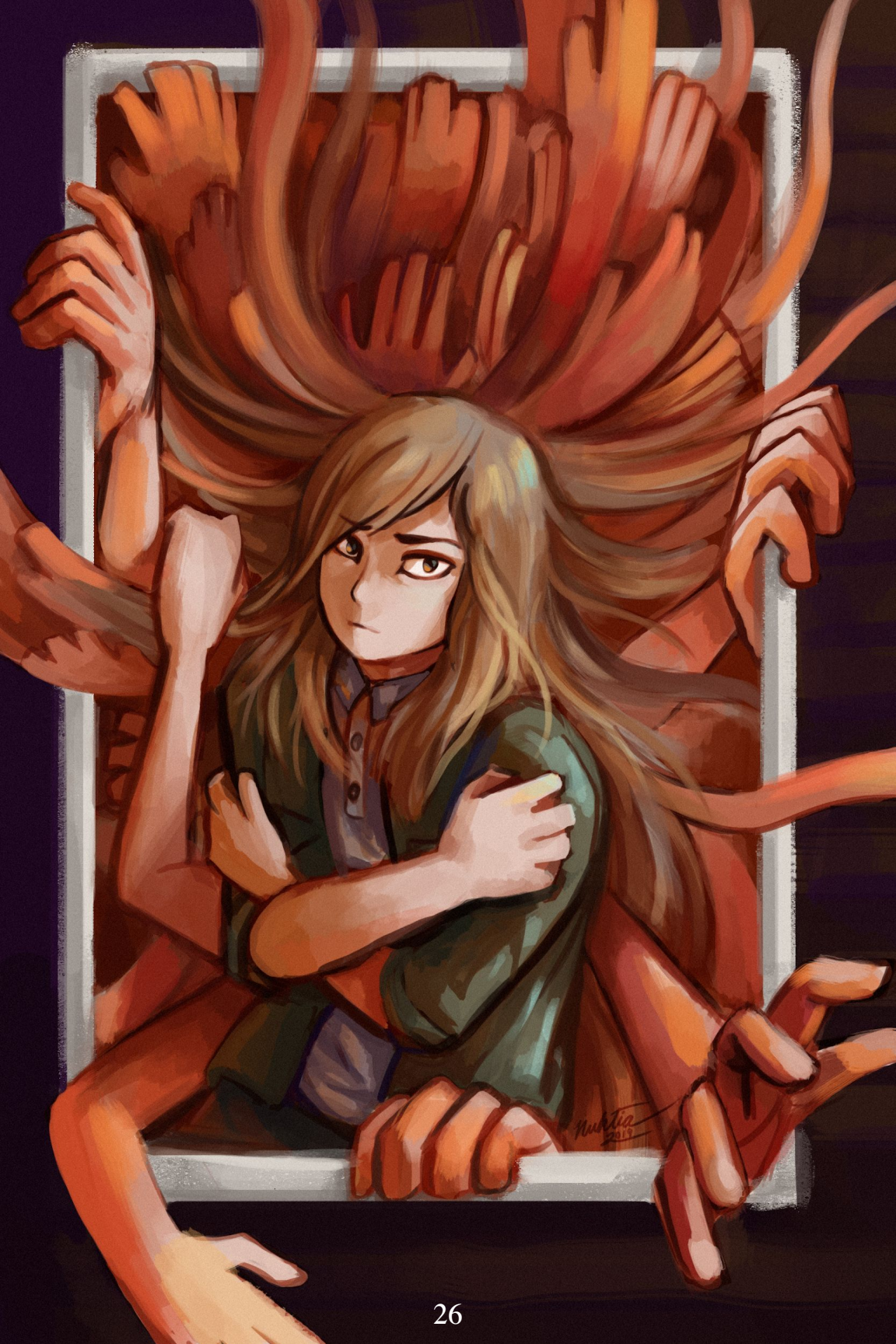
pulled away from her. Neptune dusted her clothes awkwardly and stood. Jupiter scrambled to do the same, then nodded towards the car. “So, family?”

Neptune groaned as she turned back and reached down to grab her bags. She hefted them up and nodded slowly. The car horn blared again, making her cringe and shake her head. “Really wish it wasn’t,”

And then it blew again, invoking a strongly resentful curse from Neptune. “Really, really wish that.” Jupiter bit her lip and pulled at the sleeves of her jacket. She stepped closer to her, paused for a second, then took one of her bags. She smiled to her and began to follow her. “Well, I’ll help you.” They walked towards the car in silence. Neptune looked to the car and clicked her tongue, shaking her head. Jupiter nervously stared down, then dropped the bag hesitantly. “How about a parting gift?” Neptune’s eyes narrowed when Jupiter said this, then she nodded to her.

“Fine-“ Jupiter moved forward quickly, mouth pressed to hers and slowly wrapped her hand around her arm. Neptune succumbed into it, dropped her bags, then wrapped her arms around her. Then, a prolonged honk came from the car, urging Neptune away from her with an exasperated eyeroll. “I expect you to give me a call… Don’t leave me hanging Jupes.”

As she opened the car door, Jupiter’s eye was caught by the subtle smile on Neptune’s lips.



The humming of the wind was obnoxiously loud, resonating through the window. It was a quick decision to plug her ears with earbuds and turn her phone on to scroll through scattered white noise videos. She sat criss-cross on her bed and pushed her hair out of her face, eagerly fumbling for any sound that would block out the annoyance that continued from the earliest dawn. With a quick glance to the window, she watched the branches rock in the wind with the stars peeking out between their leaves and elongated bark arms. From where she sat, she caught a looming shadow moving around just near the tree. She ripped the earbuds out and curiously moved to the window, squinting to make out an outline of the shadow.

The darkened figure moved close to the window, low light hitting her face and lighting familiar, intense features. With a quick release of a breathy sigh, the girl had flipped the window lock open and allowed entry. The girl on the other side of the window groaned as she climbed it, then discarded her jacket off onto the floor. “This weather is horrible to deal with. Venus, why don't you answer your phone once in a while,” She asked casually while taking her place on the edge of Venus’s bed. Venus shivered at the gust that followed her, then shut the window quickly.

“I didn't get a text. Sorry Neptune.” Venus kept her voice to a soft whisper, easing herself slowly next to her. Neptune pursed her lips, scooted closer to Venus, then pulled her mute yellow phone over. Venus scooted slightly over. Neptune flicked her eyes to her, then to the phone, typing in the passcode and examining the page it was open to.

“Trouble sleeping?” She mumbled lowly and handed it back to her, looking over her gently sullen face. Venus shook her head and pocketed her phone, looking to the window as she responded, “I'm just a little tired. Why are you here?” Neptune smirked at her response and cupped her face in her surprisingly warm hands. “Can I not visit my girlfriend at…” She turned her own head quickly to the nightstand and squinted. The bright red numbers flashed her the time, which she quickly read out, “1 in the morning?” Venus gave a lighthearted smile at this, then leaned over and lightly kissed her cheek.

“Usually you're keen on something.”

Neptune smirked and stood, pulled Venus up, then grabbed her dark blue coat. “You know me well, c’mon.” She pulled it over herself and slipped her arm around Venus’s. With the enticing offer to leave, Venus opened the window, letting the wind flow back in and ruffle their hair. She slipped on some shoes and pulled a sweater over her white dress. The wind now welcomed them and beckoned them outside as she walked to the window with Neptune. In an exhilarating moment, they both slipped out into the night. The grass rustled as their feet stepped in it, both trying to keep from shivering. Venus fixed her own hoodie and stared into the pitch night. Neptune took her arm again and guided her to the sidewalk, the house getting further and further away from them.

“Where are we going? Somewhere spooky?” Venus asked with wide eyes, full of increasing interest. Neptune shook her head and held onto her arm, turning to kiss her forehead.

“Not what I had on the agenda today, but if you want-“ Venus rose onto her tiptoes, shaking her head as she took her hands. “I’d prefer you to surprise me!”

Neptune smirked slowly and planted a kiss softly on her lips warmly. Venus's lips quivered slightly when she pulled back, becoming cold again. She smiled to herself and continued to follow her through the barren streets, pushing through the air that numbed her legs while they walked. "I hope all this walking is worth it?"

"Trust me, the frostbite will be too." Venus's eyes widened at her remark, causing Neptune to quickly add to it, "You can have my jacket when we do get there." She reassured softly, leading her across the dim street towards the park nearby. The trees loomed over them as they walked hand-in-hand up a subtle dirt path that was barely noticeable in the dark. Neptune stopped and nudged at some rocks with her foot, then sat and brought Venus down with her. Venus gave her a confused glance, then looked around. Nothing too out of the ordinary struck her interest, so she began to say, "Why are we here again?" Neptune pointed to the sky towards the glimmering stars above, so Venus looked up.

"I don't get it."Neptune groaned after she said this and slumped onto her shoulder. "Don't you like looking at stars or something?"

"Stargazing?" Venus stifled her laughter and felt an amused smile on her lips. She didn't continue further and looked at Neptune, who sighed and looked up again herself. "I know the word, I just wanted to show you a nice spot to do it. Or whatever. I mean I don't get the point of you staring at the sky until your eyes are dry, but it's something you like." Venus blinked and slowly looked at the sky again, then to Neptune. "I could try to help you understand it. I don't know if it'll help any, it's more of a little hobby." Neptune looked over without hesitation and said, "That's a strange reason to stare at the sky." Venus rolled her eyes and crossed her arms.

"It's better with something to help you look at it." Neptune pointed to the sky suddenly with a proud look sparkling in her eyes. "Let's do this my way then. Look, what do you see there?" Venus tried to make out where Neptune was pinpointing. While she squinted, Neptune shrugged and scooted closer to her. "Here's a novel hint: there is no right answer."

Venus frowned again and shook her head, "That's not how you stargaze-"

"Well, it's how I wanna do it with you." Neptune smirked and leaned against her, motioning to the stars again. Venus looked to the general area of where Neptune had motioned and tried to form a picturesque constellation of her own. Finally, once she began furrowing her brows she mumbled, "I guess… It looks like a flower?" Her finger pointed out the stars, connecting them haphazardly into a messy form of a flower you would find in a rudimentary notebook. Neptune slipped her hand in hers, then nodded as she pulled their hands down together. Venus turned to her and smiled at her, letting herself lazily gaze over Neptune.

The dark had veiled them both, but still Neptune could just barely make out the look in Venus's eyes that sparkled with a genuine enjoyment. Neptune wrapped her arm around her and pointed at a few stars, then traced them slowly out to form an idea of what she was describing. "This looks like a cat head, like in a cartoon-strip style," Venus began to snicker softly at her, which only made her roll her eyes.

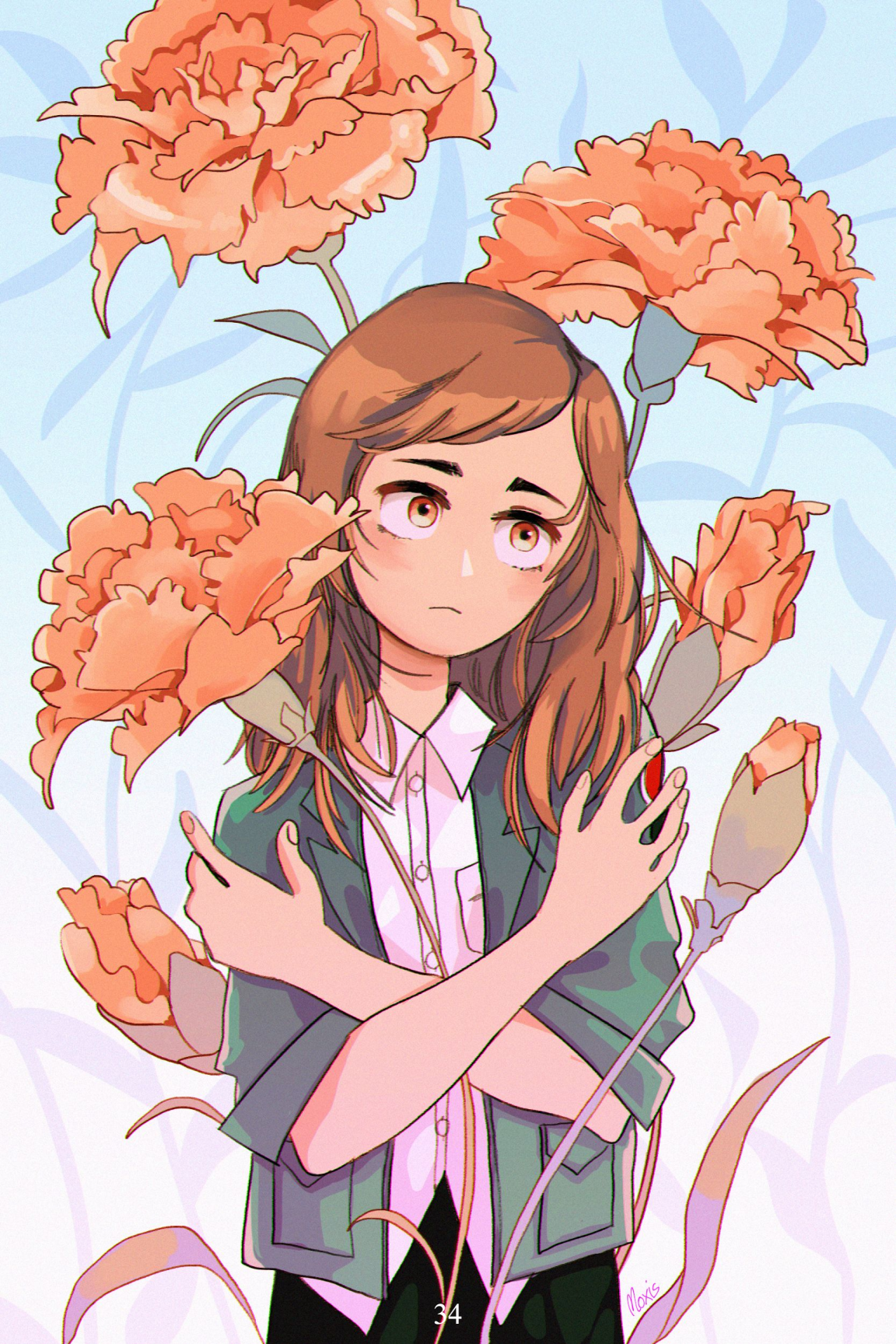
"Hey, I didn't laugh at your flower." She leaned over and kissed her cheek gently, getting her laughs to die down into a soft response. "Sorry." Neptune shook her head as Venus apologized, then leaned on her again. "Don't

apologize, I'm having fun still…" Settling back into the silence, she could feel Venus slump against her. Neptune waited for her to speak, but then heard her yawn softly and could barely make out her eyes closing. She grew quiet, which wasn't surprising to Neptune. She wrapped her arms around her and let her lean her head on her shoulder.

"I appreciate you coming with me, want me to carry you home?" Neptune asked as Venus shook her head quickly and closed her eyes. "Let's just stay here a while longer." She murmured, yawning again while Neptune held her. With a secret smile, she kissed her forehead again and mumbled back, "As long as it gets you to rest." It was quiet for a moment, then Venus said with a voice full of sleep, "It… It was thoughtful that you remembered I liked to stargaze."

"Even if I still don't see the appeal of it?" When Neptune said this, all Venus did was laugh softly and nod. "Well, you made it fun for you, and that's what matters to me." Venus assured softly, then let her head rest on her shoulder again. "Can I sleep now?"

"Go ahead, I got you."



Usually, they found themselves at a coffee shop, at a museum, or in the car. Once one of them got their license, they decided to travel and got into the car, quietly joking and teasing about the driving. A soft mutter came from their driver, saying, “Lay off! Neither of you have your license yet-“

“I’ll gladly take that wheel from you! I’ve driven before.”

“Illegally, stay in your seat Neptune!” Jupiter chirped into the conversation quickly, shooting Neptune a glance before turning back around. Regularly, this is how most excursions they recently went on had went: Venus nervously tapping her nails on her wheel as she checked and checked her speed, Jupiter had her window down and enjoyed the wind blowing on her face while she meditated what everyone said, and Neptune had sprawled out on the back seat of the car as much as her seatbelt allowed her. Venus gave another sigh, let her eyes dart quickly around the road, then to the mirror to look at Neptune. “I think you’re making her nervous.” Neptune tilted her head down to look over her sunglasses and triumphantly smirked. “Am not. Venus, am I making you nervous?” Venus rolled her eyes and shook her head. “Just… sit up so I don’t get pulled over?” To allow her an eased mind, Neptune shimmied up and sat on the seat.

Shops and streets were ahead of them, promising a fulfilling day for them to experience. Jupiter eyed a few restaurants and made a note of which ones they could all agree on for lunch later that day. Neptune leaned onto the door and peered out the window momentarily, then leaned forward to tap Venus’s shoulder. “Are you ready to see whatever Jupiter has planned?” She nodded

quickly and hummed softly along with the song on the radio. She glanced to Jupiter, then back to the road. “She hasn’t really told me what we’re doing.”

“Be alert, it’s something surprising, I can promise that.” Neptune teased as she fell back into her seat, receiving an eye-roll and a nonchalant shrug from Jupiter. “It’s not too big of a deal, I probably over-hyped it just a bit.”

“So, what am I looking for again? I do need to park somewhere-“

“Oh! Here!”Jupiter pointed to an open spot by a row of little stores, forcing Venus to suddenly drive up to it and start parking. She bit her lip and glanced back, then mumbled, “I hate parallel parking…” Once she put the car in park and turned the keys, Neptune practically sprang out of her seat and stretched her arms up. “Let's get this show on the road.” She yawned out. Venus got out and walked to the sidewalk, looked for a parking meter, then shrugged as Jupiter and Neptune walked over.

“I think this is free parking?” Neptune snickered and threw her arm around her. “Well, it’ll be your car getting towed, not mine!” Venus stuck her tongue out at her and reached for Jupiter’s hand. “No, you’re fine. It’s free.” Jupiter confirmed, starting to pull them along, knowing right where they were headed. Neptune pulled her arm back and took Venus’s other hand while she began to swing their arms.

Through the sidewalks by quaint, little shops, Jupiter strung her girlfriends along and kept a tight grip on Venus. She could hear Neptune grumbling her string of complaints, and each time she glanced back, Venus stared at the ground with a sheerly bored glint in her eyes. They passed another set of stores

that were just like the previous ones, weaved through the small groups of people, then came to a halting stop, running into Jupiter. Jupiter awkwardly chuckled, then took their hands. All previous resentment for making them trek so far had washed away.

She let their hands go and began to walk to a shop that looked like it was on the smaller side compared to the other shops. She entered quickly, leaving them to wonder if she had wanted them to follow. Neptune grabbed Venus's hand, much to her dismay, and dragged her inside. When they entered they were faced by dusty shelves filled with trinkets, a couple of cramped bookshelves, and the man behind the register that barely acknowledged them. Venus clung to Neptune's arm and tried to pick out Jupiter within the tall shelves.

Neptune walked past the first few, then said quickly, "There she is! Jupiter!" She whipped around, holding books that were trying to hold themselves together by their tattered spines. She sheepishly met them and handed the books to Neptune. She tapped the hardback cover that had a strange symbol etched deeply into it. Neptune took it and flipped the pages open, while Venus inspected the books in Jupiter's arms. Incantations riddled the pages akin to how words were organized in dictionaries. "Witchcraft books?"

Jupiter shrugged and hauled the books over into Venus's arms, who let out a soft, struggling noise as she tried to hold the books up. "I think it's neat!" Neptune looked up from the book when Jupiter said this, then to Venus. She hefted the books up again and groaned, "This is as heavy as textbooks... Do we need all these?" She huffed out, placing them on the floor.

"Maybe? I wanted to see if we can try some things, or just... see if any of this

works?" Jupiter suggested, along with Neptune shaking her head and closing the book. "We can really find this on the internet, no need to spend money, or break Venus's arms by having her carry these."

"Hey!"

"The point is, I know some stuff and we can really just hold a ritual or whatever if we really wanted in the park. It's very elementary." Neptune explaining, waving the book around before squeezing it between two books. Jupiter knelt down by the pile and picked one up, walking past them to the counter.

"Still getting this one!" Neptune shook her head and grabbed Venus's hand, pulling her again to the counter and watching while Jupiter paid for the book. The two both waited in silence, Venus tapping the counter boredly while her eyes shifted around. With a stiff 'thank you", Jupiter took the book and led them out the door, smiling mischievously. Neptune caught her face and put her hand on her hip, "So, why that book? What was so dire you had to have it?" Jupiter held it out to her with a smile still on her lips. "It's a healing spell book!"

Venus frowned a bit. "That's cheesy and... Odd." Jupiter shook her head and opened it, flipping through its contents. "No, there's some interesting ones here, mental healing, overcoming-" Neptune gently put her hand on Jupiter's shoulder and slowly squeezed it reassuringly.

"You know, we're here for you." She said softly, watching as Jupiter looked to her. She could see the worry in her eyes. Jupiter hugged the book close to her, pursed her lips, and looked to the sidewalk. Venus slowly slipped her pinky

pinky around hers and gave her a warm smile. “You can talk to us, when you’re ready. If you want…” They both heard her sigh lowly and nod. She raised her head and said, “It’s still hard, y’know? You both get it, I’m sure, but I haven’t quite figured out how to… Can we go? Sit?” Neptune nodded and took her hand off the book, taking them both to the nearest bench to sit at. She set the book down on the sidewalk and leaned back on the bench. Neptune put her arm around her shoulders, and Venus held onto Jupiter’s hand tightly. They made her feel compactly calm and oddly safe.

“Going home to my mom wasn’t fun, it still hurts to be around her,” She slowly broke off what she was saying, then continued, “I just can’t stand her sometimes. She’s always just being mean about whatever she deems unfit.” She nestled into Neptune, rubbed her thumb against Venus’s fingers as she sighed again. “Sometimes I don’t know what to do.” Neptune turned her head to her and kissed her cheek gently, then pulled back.

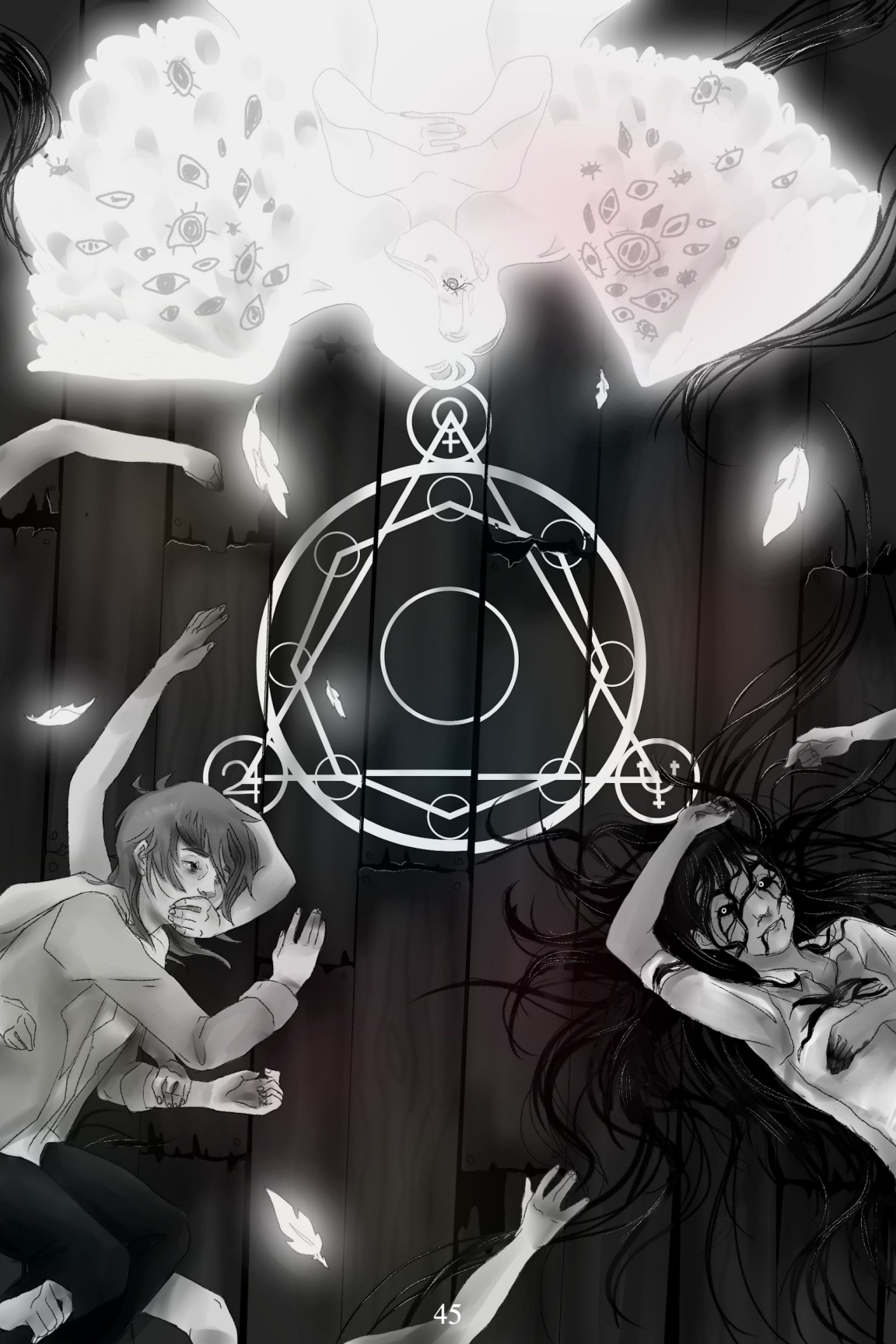
“Jupiter, it doesn’t matter what she thinks. Do you think I care about anything my parents say about me? I don’t. I know it’s harder for you though…” Neptune trailed off and stared at her, moving her hand up to brush her hair from her face. “But…” Venus began quietly, leaning onto her shoulder, “We want you to feel like you can be yourself, you’re wonderful. We wouldn’t wish that you were any different.” Jupiter felt herself smile again, then she kissed Venus’s forehead lovingly.

“Thanks, I really appreciate you both.” Tears started to prick her eyes, making Neptune groan, “Jeez, don’t get sappy!”

“I’m not!”

“She so is!”

The three of them laughed and elbowed each other, smiling and giggling as the aftermath. At the end of their trip, they loaded the car and reminisced on their trip, discarding any thoughts of the book they had bought. And that was the way they preferred it to stay.



Contributors

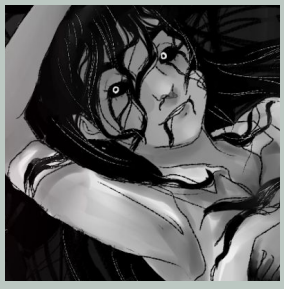
Artists

Aelin - pages 11-12

. . . . . www.instagram.com/umbrqstaff
. . . . . www.instagram.com/lesbiananarchy
. . . . . sardothn.tumblr.com

Bek - page 45

twitter.com/wiltless . . . . . .
wiltless.tumblr.com . . . . . .



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. . . . . www.deviantart.com/cordaello
. . . . . twitter.com/cordaello
. . . . . www.instagram.com/cordaello
. . . . . cordaello.tumblr.com

Corgi - page 1

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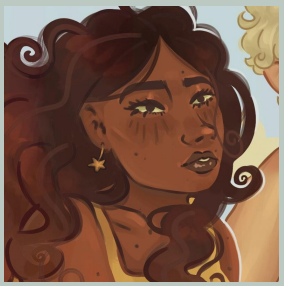
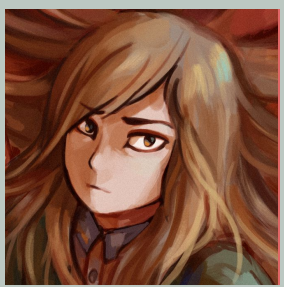


Desdetfo - pages 2-3

. . . . . desdetfo.tumblr.com

Elle - page 9

elle-arts.tumblr.com . . . . . .

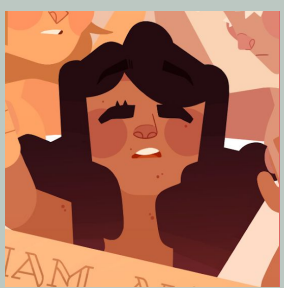


Estee - page 27

. . . . . nuktia.tumblr.com
. . . . . www.instagram.com/nuktia
. . . . . twitter.com/nuktia

LM - pages 17-18

twitter.com/madeinthemorrow . . . . . .
www.instagram.com/madeinthemorrow . . . .

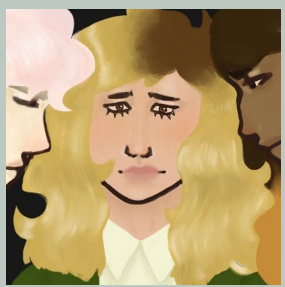


Lance - page 33

. . . . . coolchulainn.tumblr.com

Max - pages 42-43

stellarinterlude.tumblr.com . . . . . .
twitter.com/devilradios . . . . . .
www.instagram.com/stellarinterlude . . . . . .



Micaiah - page 27

. . . . . alpharigel.tumblr.com
. . . . . www.instagram.com/etheretches

Moxis - page 34

moxis.tumblr.com . . . . . .
twitter.com/moxis__ . . . . . .

Lee - page 25

. . . . . youthful-wind.tumblr.com

Shi Briggs - page 44

twitter.com/shibert . . . . . .
www.instagram.com/grossandcolorful . . . .

Sidney - page 19

. . . . . www.deviantart.com/sidlaux
. . . . . twitter.com/sidlaux
. . . . . sidlaux.tumblr.com
. . . . . www.instagram.com/sidlaux
. . . . . sidlaux.artstation.com

Sylphee - page 35

sylphee.tumblr.com . . . . . .
twitter.com/sylpheeart . . . . . .

Writers

Lapis - pages 4-8

"A Gentle Hand"

twitter.com/teamchaosprez
www.instagram.com/teamchaosprez
teamchaosprez.tumblr.com

Lily - pages 13-16

"undo the division of day and night"

twitter.com/sodalitelesbian

vainlesbian.tumblr.com

Tatiana - pages 20-24, 28-32, 36-41
"As Good As New", "Knowing Me, Knowing You",
"The Name of the Game"

archiveofourown.org/users/lafemmestars

lafemmestars.tumblr.com

Organized by Emery Neitzel
cinnamlm.tumblr.com
www.instagram.com/cinnamlm